



San Diego City Attorney Michael J. Aguirre

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Maria Velasquez, Communications Director: (619) 235-5725 (pager & voicemail)mvelasquez@sandiego.gov

VETERANS' CHARITY SCAMMER SENTENCED TO JAIL *San Diego City Attorney's Office Warns Donors to Beware*

San Diego, CA: Preying on donor's patriotism, love of the American flag, and concern for homeless veterans, Douglas Dees through his California Veteran's Employment Center bilked thousands of dollars in "donations" from unsuspecting San Diegans. Using the phone lists from a former non-profit veteran's charity, Dees and his team of telemarketers contacted those donors for additional donations, allegedly for local homeless veterans. The donors were never told that his new "business" was NOT a charitable organization and in fact had no relationship whatsoever to the former non-profit organization with a similar name. Dees, however, falsely told donors they could deduct contributions from their taxes. The donors were told they were being contacted "once again" on behalf of local veterans and were urged to donate at the "red, white, or blue" level.

According to Deputy City Attorney Cindy Davis, last week the 43 year old defendant pleaded guilty to three counts of grand theft and three counts of telephone solicitation fraud. He was sentenced to serve 270 days in jail, perform an additional 45 days of Public Work Service upon his release from jail, and pay restitution to his victims. He was also banned from working in telephonic sales or for any charitable or community organization for the next three years.

The case came to the San Diego City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit for continued investigation and prosecution from the San Diego Office of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VA-OIG). The City Attorney's Office and the VA-OIG worked together to execute a search warrant at Dee's storefront "Employment Center" located on 30th Street in the city of San Diego. Numerous important documents and computer systems were seized. The computer files revealed thousands of donor names and contact information. From approximately January 2002 to May 2004, Dees collected more than \$80,000 from more than 1,500 donors. He paid his telemarketers commissions of approximately 40% of each donation they brought in.

The Department of Veterans Affairs was impressed with the outcome of the case. Special Agent in Charge, Douglas J. Carver noted "the VA-OIG is enthusiastic about partnering with local prosecutors for the benefit of veterans. Mr. Dees deserved to be jailed; his actions hurt all legitimate and truly helpful veterans' charities."

Consumers are reminded to check out charities before they make a donation. California charities must be registered with the California Registry of Charitable Trusts. To verify whether a charity is registered go to www.caag.state.ca.us/charities. Another excellent source of information regarding national charities is the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance found at www.give.org.

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